

WINNING THE FIGHT AGAINST McCARTHY

The Need to Struggle on Two Fronts

ALAN F. WESTIN

ON SALE at a Cambridge, Massachusetts, newsstand is a handsome booklet entitled *McCarthy on Trial*. Its front cover features eighteen identical pictures of the junior Senator from Wisconsin arranged in a swastika. Piled in a high stack, the booklet shares a shelf with "McCarthy—A Documented Record" (the *Progressive*), an issue of the *New Republic* lashing out at the Senator's performance at that week's installment of the Army-McCarthy hearings, and sundry other anti-McCarthy articles in magazines from *Time* to the *New Yorker*. The day that *McCarthy on Trial* was displayed, newspapers featured the statement by Senator Ralph Flanders of Vermont that McCarthy's anti-Communism "completely parallels that of Adolf Hitler."

THE liberal has long had to fight a steady campaign on two fronts—against the demagogue on the "right," and, on the other hand, the international Communist conspiracy—but never has this been more difficult than today, when the loud threat of McCarthy on the one front makes many a liberal think that it might be advisable to concentrate on the nearer danger and neglect for a moment the other enemy. How disastrous this would be to the anti-McCarthy forces, ALAN F. WESTIN indicates in this article, which warns us of a new Communist plan to infiltrate the liberal lines. Mr. Westin, a Teaching Fellow in Government at Harvard, was born in New York in 1929, took his A.B. at the University of Florida, and is a graduate of Harvard Law School. He is a member of the District of Columbia bar and serves on the Lawyers' Panel of the Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts. His most recent contribution to COMMENTARY, "Do Silent Witnesses Defend Civil Liberties?" (June 1953)—a discussion of the problems raised by the Communist use of the Fifth Amendment—was nationally discussed. Mr. Westin has also contributed to the Columbia and Yale law reviews, and to other periodicals.

Another item reported that a local attorney was preparing to present to the Massachusetts State Democratic Convention a resolution in support of his belief that McCarthy was "a low-grade bully of the storm-trooper type with all the makings of a Hitler. . . ." I watched several browsers pick up copies of the *On Trial* booklet, flip through its pages, and produce quarter coins with obvious relish at this latest addition to the anti-McCarthy library.

Indeed, *McCarthy on Trial* is well worth twenty-five cents; more important political lessons have seldom been offered for so small a price. The booklet recounts a public investigation conducted by a "New York Trades Union Veterans Committee" on January 6, 1954, at St. Nicholas Arena—a "hearing" before several thousand spectators at which Senator McCarthy was an absent defendant to an "indictment" of him before the "Court of Public Opinion" for illegal acts and violations of the United States Constitution.

McCarthy on Trial seems to be part of the growing united movement against the Senator—part of the swift turn of events that saw men like Bishop Shiel and newspapers like the *New York Herald Tribune* confess that they too, to use the dramatic words of Army counsel Joseph Welch, had "never really gauged [his] cruelty or [his] recklessness." For them, as for millions of Americans, Welch's query, "Have you no decency, sir? At long last, have you left no sense of decency?" has been answered by the image—a correct one—of a cunning and brutal politician fighting gutter-style to preserve the shadow empire of terror and power which he has carved out of the insecurity of a nation facing the menace of Communist subversion at home and Communist imperialism

abroad. But *McCarthy on Trial* represents a special brand of anti-McCarthyism that sets it apart from the Flanders-*Time* approach, and makes it worth careful examination.

TO CLOSE students of the Senator, the charges developed by the mock investigation in New York have a familiar and convincing ring: the Senator's anti-liberal and anti-labor voting record; his steadily inflated past as a "wounded" war hero; the Lustron and Pepsi-Cola "favoritism" incidents; his role as defender of the Nazi SS troopers in the Malmédy massacre hearings; allegations of his links with anti-Semites like Upton Close and Joseph Kamp; his backing by Texas oil primitives, America Firsters, and "China Lobby" leaders; his dubious financial transactions and income-tax records; his part in Millard Tydings' defeat in the election of 1950; the damage to reputations and the aura of all-encompassing disloyalty resulting from his tenure as chairman of the Permanent Investigating Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Government Operations; and a number of still other malodorous incidents and operations. As the "transcript" of the trial unfolds, witness after witness rises to condemn the Senator, expose his violations of civil rights, and urge his condemnation by all right-thinking men. In a dramatic climax, the final witness, a union president, calls upon the American people to join in this indictment of the "criminal acts of McCarthy" and devote "their full hearts and minds and lives to the protection of their basic liberties." McCarthy can be defeated, the speaker predicts, "if there is some clear and courageous leadership given to the groundswell of disgust and hatred with which even now the vast majority of the American people reject McCarthyism and all its evil works."

McCarthyism as a phenomenon, the witnesses and counsel explain, represents an anti-intellectual, anti-liberal, and nativist tradition familiar in American history, but spectacularly powerful today because of cold war "tensions." Dr. Alphaeus Hunton, secretary of the Council on African Affairs, ex-

plains that McCarthy is at the head of "the forces that would stifle all expression of opposition to the imperialist, Jim-crow, status quo. . . ." In fact, "the history of all investigating committees from Martin Dies on down to the present McCarthy and Velde Committees has been one of victimizing the fighters against Jim-crow. . . ." Another witness added that the McCarthy committee is obviously a "very white committee," against which, when subpoenaed to appear before it, this witness had invoked the Fifteenth Amendment (in addition to the Fifth) in order to "shift the discussion from the Communist question to the Negro question . . . [and] the larger, very sinister picture of a new kind of colonialism reducing the American people to the status of a colonial people."

At another level, Dr. Melba Phillips, formerly of Brooklyn College, exposes McCarthyism as a drive to stifle scholarly and scientific research, to prevent free inquiry and free teaching. Dr. Phillips solemnly concludes that "the fate of Harvard University and the Jefferson School of Social Science is indivisible. . . ." Witness Julius Emspak relates that McCarthyism is a blow at labor and unionism, part of the "Taft-Hartley drive." Emspak testifies that his union has experienced many attacks by the "witch-hunting committees," and that in every case it was to "further the interests of the big companies with whom our union was in negotiations or in struggle." He adds, however, that the committees themselves are *not* the greatest menace to our democracy: "These witch-hunting committees are only the servants of the big corporations whose unbridled financial power and greed are the real threat to our democracy. . . . The job of these committees is to create the political atmosphere in the country where the corporations can step in and do what they have been trying to do for generations: cripple, destroy, set back the labor movement of America."

Most fundamentally, however, a novelist declares, McCarthyism must be understood as spearheading the current drive "to destroy peace among the nations. . . . If one

were to apply a general label to the theme of all Senator McCarthy's investigations, one would have to call them warmongering." The "phony spy investigations, his constant attack upon anyone and everyone who stands for peace and speaks for peace," and similar warlike acts, all demonstrate that Senator McCarthy is out "to provoke a world conflagration." Summing up to the "jury," prosecuting counsel Frank Serri concludes his case on this same note with a plea to end armaments and soldiering:

I hope this trial and this verdict of guilty will help to stem McCarthyism—will help to stem the drift to depression, reaction, and war. And I give you this closing phrase from a Russian play. I saw it, no, not in Moscow—in New York. It is about the return of a soldier—and the old soldier puts his arms around the young corporal, and as the curtain goes down he says: "I give you a toast: 'A world with no more uniforms.'" I thank you. (*Prolonged applause.*)

HAVING analyzed the nature and meaning of McCarthyism, the Committee moved on to formulate a plan of action to deal with the problem. This required a sense of history, the editor explains. "At the war's end, the hearts of the American people had been filled with high hope. . . . A better and more fruitful life, it was fervently believed, was now at hand." This illusion was soon shattered, for "the Economic Royalists had not been idle during the war years." Having amassed wealth and power while young Americans died in battle, "now, from their high-placed positions, with the object of maintaining their vast war profits, they launched an all-out assault against the foreign policies of the Roosevelt Administration and the hard won gains achieved by the people during the New Deal. With startling swiftness, the concept of close friendly relations among the major powers in the post-war world was replaced by that of the Truman Doctrine. . . . Instead of peace, the Cold War was declared." To achieve this aggressive purpose, the Truman administration unleashed an orgy of anti-Soviet "red-baiting" and "war hysteria," and counted on this manufactured scare to support reaction

at home and American expansionism abroad. McCarthy is simply the whole cold-war tendency of the Truman and Eisenhower administrations revealed in naked simplicity.

Further, concludes the editor, after the witnesses have testified, the central lesson to be drawn is that "McCarthyism can exist without McCarthy . . . the Senator is its spawn rather than its sire. The defeat not only of McCarthy but of McCarthyism dictates an end to the repressive fear-ridden precepts of the cold war and a return to the ways of sanity, security, and peace." This, adds jury foreman Leon Straus, will rest on united work in community organizations, with a mobilization of "those who fight McCarthy—for all those who fight McCarthyism. . . ." Concluding on that note, the "Action Program" makes a fervent plea for Americans to "support all actions by labor and people's organizations in the fight against McCarthyism and all other attempts to infringe or destroy civil and democratic liberties."

By this time most readers will have recognized *McCarthy on Trial* for what it is—a full-strength dose of Communist propaganda peddled under the label of anti-McCarthyism. It is probably unnecessary to name the booklet's editor as Albert E. Kahn (*The Great Conspiracy Against Russia*); to note that the "jury" had such trade-union affiliations as the Fur and Leather Workers, the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers, and the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers; to learn that the chief prosecution counsel was president of the New York City chapter of the National Lawyers' Guild; or to go deeply into the political character of witnesses like Howard Fast, Mrs. Paul Robeson, and James Aronson (the executive editor of the *National Guardian*). Actually, the reader can get his bearings simply by looking at the books advertised by the same publisher (Cameron and Kahn) on the back cover of the pamphlet: *Eyewitness in Indo-China* by Joseph Starobin, "the only American newspaperman yet to travel behind the Viet Minh lines, to interview Ho Chi Minh . . ." (and who just happens to be foreign correspondent for the *Daily Worker*);

or *The Truth about Julius and Ethel Rosenberg*, by John Wexley (also author of *They Shall Not Die* and *The Last Mile*). Nor is it difficult to see the booklet's conclusion for what it really is—an attempt by the Communists and Communist collaborators to slip back into respectability through the door of a new “popular front” against McCarthyism, and to exploit the fight against that unsavory and sinister politician solely in their own equally unsavory and sinister interest.

SUCH a crude piece of Communist literature and such an obvious “front” meeting as it describes will find few dupes at present, and if this were the main type of “popular front” tactic being planned today, the job of counter-contamination would be relatively easy. From all reports, however, the Communists have bigger plans for cashing in on the growing revulsion against “McCarthyism.” Party platforms and party instructions have directed the faithful to move away from obvious front activities and infiltrate old-line labor, liberal, and civil-liberties groups, even though these are anti-Communist. Veterans' groups, church societies, parent-teacher groups, campus and student movements, organizations of Negro, Jewish, and other “minority” groups, and even “patriot” organizations have also been marked for penetration, with “anti-McCarthyism” to be used as a lever in the “fight for peace” and the “fight against imperialism.” Party literature also suggests that an attempt is under way to couple the rejection of McCarthy with the spread of the view of the Communist conspiracy as being essentially a “historical curiosity” that unduly preoccupied the nation during the heyday of the Grand Inquisitor from Wisconsin.

This overt-covert Communist plan to “go into mass organizations” and work with “honest people aroused by McCarthyism” comes at a strategic moment. After five years of sweeping victories by the Senator against all comers, it seems that a new balance of forces on the McCarthy question is now emerging. Since this balance is not settled or stabilized as yet, and since the analysis and methods

applied by the anti-McCarthy people will be the ultimate key to success or failure, it is useful to leave the “double-think” world of the St. Nicholas Arena and take a sober look at the McCarthy situation at large.

II

GABRIEL ALMOND, in his perceptive book *The American People and Foreign Policy*, points out that the views of the general American public—as distinct from those of organized elite groups—are characteristically a matter of *mood* rather than of doctrinal line or party policy. Applying this insight to the special structure of public opinion on the McCarthy issue, I would suggest that on the eve of the Army hearings it was divided into four broad sections:

1. An ardent band of several million supporters of the Senator, solidly behind his outlook and methods.
2. An equally ardent band of anti-McCarthyites, smaller in number perhaps than the pro-McCarthyites but more influential in fields of communication and education.
3. Various “neutral” groups such as businessmen, most regular Republicans, Southern Democrats, the majority of newspaper editors, and others, who tended to see “McCarthyism” as no serious problem, or else were inclined to regard McCarthy himself as an uncouth but dedicated anti-Communist.
4. The remaining majority of the American people who, disturbed over revelations of Communist espionage and penetration of government, and unsatisfied by the explanations offered by those seemingly in the position to know, as well as by the measures taken during the Truman administration to remedy the situation, and therefore, perhaps, heedless of the counsels of moderation and appeals to civil-libertarian traditions offered by liberal commentators, were in the mood to support McCarthy as a kind of non-political “crime-fighter” against Communism in the frontier marshal or modern “Mike Hammer” style. In the main, this majority was left unconcerned by the somewhat more “abstract” issues raised by McCarthy's operations

insofar as they affected foreign policy, constitutional rights, and separation of legislative and executive powers.*

WHAT has been the impact of the Army-McCarthy hearings on this structure of opinion?

There has been little or none on the hard core of McCarthy's supporters, to whom he is still a symbol of "barn-cleaning" and a harassed spokesman "for America." Those who see defections from this group usually assume either that an increase in liberal-center protest must carry with it a decrease in McCarthy support (which is something like thinking that because your own radio has been turned up in volume, your neighbor's has been turned down); or that occasional criticism of the Senator by his own supporters is hardening into opposition (which is to ignore the fact that comradely suggestions, like those from Colonel McCormick, are merely cautions to the Senator to adjust his gunsights so that *all* his shots will hit the target).

Of course, the hearings have intensified the feeling of the confirmed anti-McCarthy groups, and have increased the output of anti-McCarthy literature and the scope and pace of political and organizational action against him.

On the general majority of American public opinion, however, I believe the hearings have had little or no decisive impact. To the politically uninformed but vigorously anti-Communist layman, the hearings present a picture of confused and conflicting testimony, clashing personalities, and legal maneuvers that is no more enlightening when it comes over television than when reported at length in the newspapers. McCarthy's reputation as a "hard fighter" against Com-

munism simply has not been destroyed by the hearings themselves. Popular reaction ranges from indifference to sidewalk cynicism ("Yeah, *both* sides are telling the truth—the Army and McCarthy"), to utter confusion over the whole business (I overheard one man say to his companion in a Boston bar: "Boy, have you noticed how Joe is pouring it on those Commies Cohn and Schine. He's got them on the run!").

ALTHOUGH the hearings have not radically affected the dedicated pro- and anti-McCarthy factions, or the mood of the general public, they have, however, had a decisive effect on formerly neutral groups. These have been driven to realize that the Senator can neither be ignored nor conciliated. Since the neutralists represent many of the most important elites of public opinion, with the greatest power to affect the public mood, their shift on McCarthy may in the end be decisive. The virtually solid array of Protestant and Jewish religious leaders and organizations; the virtually solid ranks of newspaper editors, radio commentators, and columnists; the overwhelmingly anti-McCarthy sentiment among educators and "good government" groups; and the appearance of important spokesmen in opposition to or criticism of McCarthy in patriotic organizations and business groups—all this offers the prospect that an end to the expansion of McCarthy's power may be at hand. And as the elites join the anti-McCarthy groups, and as a changed climate divides organizational and party loyalties on the McCarthy issues (in the American Legion, for example, and among Catholics), a shift of the general mood from mild pro-McCarthy sentiment to criticism of the Senator, or at least indifference to his political fate, is quite possible.

It is at this point that the real lesson of *McCarthy on Trial* becomes pertinent. Senator McCarthy emerged as a Grand Inquisitor because of widespread belief that he was the only real anti-Communist leader in the nation. Successful opposition to him will have to link a demonstration of the dangers of his special brand of anti-Communism

*A recent study of one middle-income ward in Boston showed over 80 per cent of those interviewed to be both Democrats *and* pro-McCarthy without their feeling any conflict between the two loyalties; while several reliable Boston political leaders reported that large numbers of voters did not feel that President Eisenhower's general statements on "demagoguery" or "fear" were meant to apply to McCarthy!

with an unequivocal rejection of the special Communist-line brand of "anti-McCarthyism" on which he has thrived so far.

This means not only that Communists and united-fronters must be kept out of the organizations that fight McCarthy, but also that the diagnosis itself of the evil he represents must be kept relevant and unclouded. Just as true anti-McCarthyism is not "the fight against American cold war colonialism," neither is it a campaign to return to the "simpler days" of America before McCarthy, if that means substituting for the present "black silence of fear" raised by "McCarthyism" a black-out of silence on the continuing threat of aggression and subversion.

To minimize and neglect either economic and military resistance to Communism abroad, or exposure and control of the Communist conspiracy at home, would be to invite a McCarthy boom or the emergence of an altogether new Grand Inquisitor. The ambivalence of "soft" anti-Communism—the sort of softness, for example, which matches the absurdity of McCarthy's denunciation of Owen Lattimore as a Soviet spy with the absurdity of a defense of Lattimore as a

guileless, altogether impartial commentator on American policy in Asia—serves only to create a vacuum of mystification that fairly cries out for an unscrupulous demagogue.

At the same time, however, that we keep the Communist record straight, and carry forward the anti-Communist fight, we must continue denouncing McCarthy and his works not only as a wanton and indecent exploitation of our justified fears, but also as an irresponsible and dangerous diversion from the vital international scene. There, McCarthy and what he represents compromises us with allies and neutrals alike, and plays directly into the hands of an enemy whose main tactic today is to divide his opposition.

THE job of keeping the anti-McCarthy fight from being perverted, and in effect sabotaged, by Communist "allies" will not be hard if only it is faced up to frankly as a *job*—a job that has to be done, and whose doing calls for constant vigilance and the naming of things and persons for what they are. That this job will not be done and that the fight against him will be dominated by Communists and their fellow-travelers—this is the last real hope of McCarthy in retreat.

ELEGY

DAVID IGNATOW

I MUST find a stranger to knock on my door.
For one month I have lain on my couch
 waiting
for a friendly knock. Why has there been
 none?
Why outside is the sound always of traffic,
high-pitched impersonal hard rubber?
The sunlight has been a composition in
 sunlight,
I think it poses for me like a cold model.
My whole presence here feels like
 an intrusion.
What have I stirred up to anger

that refuses to talk to me or to knock even?
What in my behavior has been offensive,
though I recall only my good humor?
When did I last speak to someone?
I cannot even recall, and may be making up
to salvage my pride this being good-natured,
for it is so distant now that it is like an echo
that I can only suspect as a distortion of
 my mind.
I must wait for a stranger, and if I have not
 in fact
been good to my friends, I will be so now
to strangers.

DAVID IGNATOW's poems have appeared frequently in our pages over the past several years.